

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 EA-10 FRB-03 INR-10 NEA-11 NSAE-00 ICA-11
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7676
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION GENEVA

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PASS STR FOR AMBASSADOR STRAUSS FROM AMBASSADOR BREWSTER

USOECD

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, MTN, EFIN, UK, OECD
SUBJECT: UK TELEVISION SCREEN TIME QUOTAS

REF: (A) STATE 163671; (B) LONDON 9052 AND PREVIOUS

1. WE ARE CONTINUING OUR EFFORTS IN SUPPORT OF THE U.S.
INDUSTRY'S CASE AGAINST REDUCTIONS IN ITS PROGRAM TIME
ON BRITISH INDEPENDENT TELEVISION.

2. MOST RECENTLY, IN RESPONSE TO REF A, E/C MINISTER
MILLER DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY
BUTLER, THE SENIOR ECONOMIC OFFICIAL IN THE FOREIGN
OFFICE. MILLER MADE THE ARGUMENTS SUGGESTED BY THE DE-
PARTMENT, EMPHASIZING MOST HEAVILY THAT THE IBA'S STATU-
TORY INDEPENDENCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT RELIEVE
THE UK FROM ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE OECD
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INVISIBLES CODE. ALSO QUESTIONED JUSTIFICATION FOR MORE
RESTRICTIVE POLICY UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF
HEALTHY AND COMPETITIVE BRITISH INDUSTRY.

3. BUTLER TOOK THE POSITION THAT THE IBA IS AN INDEPEN-
DENT, AUTONOMOUS BODY WHICH THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT
SEEK TO INFLUENCE. HE SAID THE IBA IS INSTRUCTED UNDER

BRITISH LAW TO ENSURE THAT A "PROPER PROPORTION OF PROGRAMS BE OF DOMESTIC ORIGIN" AND WHILE "PROPER" IS NOT DEFINED, THE IBA HAS THE LEGAL AUTHORITY TO MAKE SUCH JUDGMENTS. BUTLER SAID THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAD DISCUSSED THE CASE WITH THE IBA AND HAD BEEN GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT THE EFFECT OF THE CHANGES BEING DISCUSSED WOULD BE TO "SLIGHTLY REDUCE FOREIGN PROGRAMS." HE ARGUED THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD INSTRUCT THE IBA ON PROGRAMMING -- "IT WOULD HAVE MAJOR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CAUSE A ROW IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS."

4. MILLER PRESSED THE POINT THAT THE DOMESTIC STATUS OF THE IBA DOES NOT EXEMPT THE UK OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE INVISIBLES CODE. BUTLER SAID HE WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE DETAILS OF THE CODE AND COULD NOT MAKE A JUDGMENT ABOUT UK OBLIGATIONS. HE CONCLUDED THAT HE WOULD MAKE OUR VIEWS KNOWN TO THE IBA, SEEK LEGAL ADVICE FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S LAWYERS AND COME BACK TO THE EMBASSY WITH A FURTHER RESPONSE.

BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

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